ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH GROUP

STORMY LAKE

Market Analysis of the Teacher Workforce

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATION

June 2010

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the short-, medium- and long-term strategic recommendations flowing from the Market Analysis of the Teacher Workforce in Alberta, a broad, Alberta-focused assessment and analysis of the challenges and opportunities related to teacher attraction and retention in the province.

This major research undertaking was commissioned by Alberta Education in response to a forecast teacher supply shortage facing the province. The situation was described in the Alberta Education RFP as follows:

> *Alberta school authorities including public, separate, private, charter, and Francophone could soon be facing significant challenges in their ability to recruit sufficient numbers of qualified individuals to careers in teaching, educational leadership, and related careers within the kindergarten to grade 12 education sector.*
>
> *Alberta Education forecasts show that student populations are rising in Alberta schools, and provincial data indicate that Alberta may need as many as 1,500 additional teachers by 2013.*
>
> *Alberta Education is working with an education based stakeholder "Working Committee" comprised of representatives from the Alberta School Boards Association, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta School Councils Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents and the Alberta Association of Deans of Education to develop strategies to both attract and retain competent, skilled individuals to careers in education.*

The Action Report is divided into three major sections. The first sections summarizes the key learnings and insights from the Learnings Report. This provides the context and rationale for the following sections.

The Strategic Considerations section was developed to synthesize the key issues that the action recommendations must address.

The Strategic Recommendations focus on both short-term opportunities, and medium- and long-term recommendations that will require a greater investment in time and or resources to implement.

SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNINGS

The social values of teachers

Social values are deep beliefs or broad orientations that set the context in which people react to situations, events, opportunities and challenges. Generally, teachers employment-related social values are focused on autonomy and well-being:

- Job is an opportunity to learn/grow
- Highly skilled, work independently
- Work must be personally/socially meaningful
- "Titles mean nothing – it's what you *do* that matters

Specifically, teachers'

- have a strong need to invest their professional lives with meaning and to find personal fulfilment through their work;
- have a need to feel that their work is useful to others and has social value;
- tend to invest their entire lives with meaning or goals, and to regularly reflect on these goals;
- have a strong need for frank, warm and spontaneous relationships with people as well as a need for communication and deep, affective exchanges with others; and
- have a tendency to feel like citizens of the world (or global village) more so than feeling like a citizen only of their own country. They also enjoy a sense of being "plugged in" to what is happening in other countries.

Current recruitment environment

Overall, there is little urgency about the workforce challenge among school districts. Generally, school districts are satisfied with their current recruitment efforts. Of the 34 participants, four in ten (38%) consider their recruitment to be very successful while six in ten (59%) rate their recruitment as somewhat successful. Only 1 participant self-reported their board's recruitment as not very successful.

There is a clear urban skew to these results. Among urban boards, 70% consider their recruitment to be very successful, whereas 75% of rural boards rate this as somewhat successful.

The recruiting of teachers for Early Learning positions is seen to be very successful by 69% of respondents. All other specialty areas are less successful.

Recruiting challenges are only expected to get moderately more challenging in 3 - 5 years. Areas of moderate concern are

- Math and science
- Second language positions
- ESL teachers
- Special education

Staffing teachers of FNMI heritage is a consistent challenge.

Attrition is downplayed

Attrition is a difficult to measure, and there is a significant amount of debate in the literature as to exactly how attrition should be defined and measured.

In Alberta, early career (non-maternity) attrition appears to be significant:

- 16% attrition in the first year
- 28% total attrition in the first four years.

By comparison, the Ontario Teachers Federation found that 10% of Ontario teachers leave the profession in the first five years, compared to 20% of US teachers (Clark & Antonelli, 2009).

The early career attrition in Alberta is explained away as natural attrition – people leaving the profession for reasons beyond job satisfaction, such as parenting, spousal career re-location, or teaching not the right profession for the individual. But the attrition issue appears to be much more significant than that.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction among teachers and principals in Alberta is low.

- 52% of teachers and principals are "very satisfied with teaching as a career", and 42% are somewhat satisfied.
- This compares to 59% of US teachers reporting to be very satisfied with their career.[i]
- Satisfaction increases with years in the profession, and is higher among Principals, VPs, and other speciality teachers, suggesting that "advancement" contributes to satisfaction.

The three most important drivers of overall career satisfaction are issues related to the work environment, support from school leadership, and work-life balance – all areas that are not fully

satisfactory for many Alberta teachers. Improvements in these areas, moreover, will be strongly related to improved local school leadership.

Motivations to become a teacher

- Enjoy children – 30% -- higher among women, teachers, and those who came to teaching at the beginning of their careers.
- Inspired by teacher(s) – 27% -- higher among men, and those who came to teaching early in career
- Love teaching – 17% -- decreases with years in the profession
- Teaching is important – 12% -- higher among those who came to teaching mid career, men, and those who teach high school.
- Accidentally fell in to teaching – 9% -- higher among those who came to teaching mid career, men, principals/VP
- Pay/benefits/perks – 1% -- higher among those who came to teaching mid career

A further motivation to share their love of a specific subject was uncovered in the qualitative research, but not asked in the quantitative research.

Some FNMI teachers are motivated by a desire to make a difference in their community. This motivation may also apply to teachers from immigrant communities.

Teaching as a vocation

There is a strong belief in the public that teaching is a calling or vocation, and that a strong part of this calling is about the nurturing of children.

This notion that teaching is a calling may be limiting and restricting, and likely forms a part of the group identity challenge (us and them) between educators and non-educators. Someone who loves science and wants to share the subject, for example, won't be part of the "calling" group.

This notion of being a vocation also potentially limits the appeal of the profession for those who don't think they have the calling.

De-motivations

Two key source of de-motivation were reported by teachers:

1. Teachers discourage teachers. Many students reported being discouraged, rather than encouraged, to enter the profession by the teachers they know.
2. Academics discourage teachers. Teaching is seen as a less important career than academia or industry.

This is of particular concern as the largest pool of potential new teachers in 3 – 5 years are in post-secondary education today.

Strengths of a rural teaching career

There are benefits of being a teacher in rural Alberta that are not always well considered or well marketed:

- Schools are smaller and more intimate.
- When you are in a small community, opportunities arrive more quickly than if you work in a city.

It is essential in small communities that new, young teaching professionals find a way to "belong" within the first couple of years.

Effective recruitment and retention strategies

A number of current strategies were seen to be effective:

- Well-organized and staffed mentor programs for starting teachers are clearly seen to have the most potential for success.
- Word-of-mouth recruiting.
- Local teacher education – where teachers are trained closer to their home communities.

In addition to mentoring, other strategies are required easing the entry of teachers into the classroom. These specifically include:

- a reduced work load in the first few years;
- on-boarding (well-organized and implemented orientation/induction programs); and
- programs to assist with student loans.

The mentoring gap

Mentoring is universally considered to be a critical retention tool, from school board administrators to principals, teachers and students in education.

However, mentoring programs across the province range from very informal to very formal and structured. There is evidence that there is an extremely large gap between how well stakeholders, including school board administrators, think mentoring and on-boarding is being done and how well teachers feel this is being done.

There were suggestions that mentoring should not to be restricted to other teaching professionals, but something that could be formally provided by the educational institutions.

The first 3 – 5 years

The early years are very tough. Support from leadership, or lack of it, can make or break a teacher's career. Classroom management, discipline, and the management of non-academic issues are the key challenges for which teachers feel unprepared.

Team building in schools is mentioned as an important element of retention. New teachers benefit from having a supportive network of teachers to help them deal with new issues.

The desire for certainty

Probationary contracts create a lot of stress about evaluation. And they contribute to tension with administrators, potentially discouraging young teachers from seeking help.

The current climate with worries about job cuts will likely increase early career attrition. New teachers might love the job, and want to be doing it, but they will leave if they don't think there will be a position for them.

Importance of school leadership

School leadership (Strategic Action #10) is seen to be essential to teacher retention and recruitment. Yet the current state of school leadership may not be good enough:

- 51% overall feel definitely well supported by their school leadership, and
- 37% definitely feel motivated and inspired by their school leadership.

A school leader has two core roles: management (budgets, facilities, reporting) and leadership (building a learning community, inspiring staff). The qualitative research interviews reveal a perception that school administration are focused on budgets rather than teacher support.

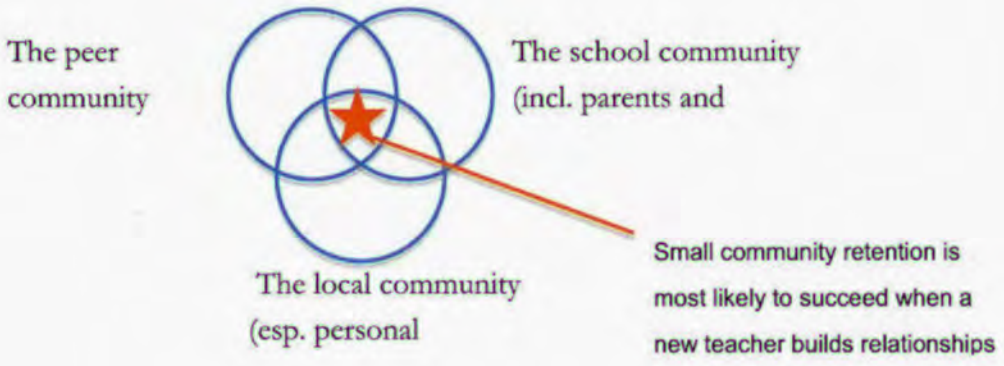
Teachers express concern that there is a conflict between evaluation and support. They are reluctant to seek support from the individual who is evaluating them.

Many other elements of attraction and retention are directly connected to the quality of the school leadership, including mentoring, school community, professional development, collegial and supportive atmosphere and professional development.

Improving local school leadership will be the single most important goal to improve teacher attraction and retention.

Community engagement

Teacher retention is a community-building challenge in three distinct communities: the school community; the peer community; and the urban/rural community. Particularly in smaller towns, teachers need to form strong relationships in at least two, if not all three, of these distinct communities.


The peer community
The school community (incl. parents and
The local community (esp. personal
Small community retention is most likely to succeed when a new teacher builds relationships

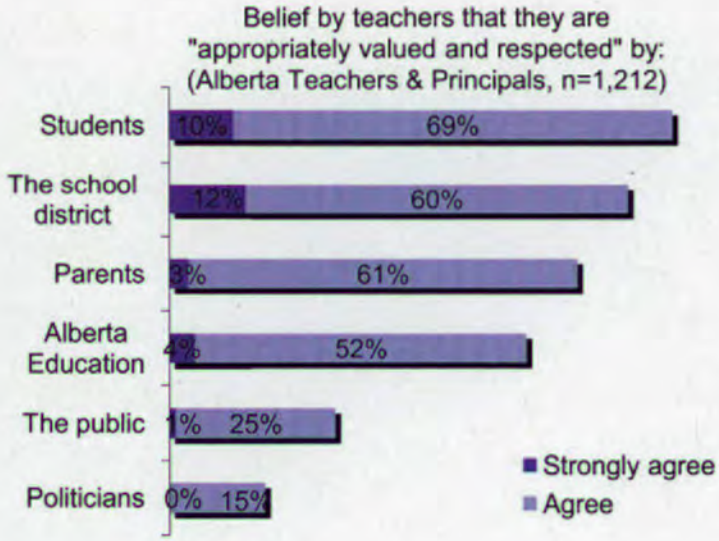
Career Development

While half of the teacher and principals surveyed feel they regularly have the opportunity to learn through training or courses with the support of their employer, six in ten teachers are not having their professional and career development aspirations fully met.

Early career teachers have the view that if you don't want to go into administration there is no room for advancement. These early career teachers perceive administration as being about is budgets and dollars, rather than about what they care about – teaching and learning. This lowers the appeal of administration as a path of advancement.

Image of the Profession

While the *reputation* of education in Alberta is strong, particularly on an international scale, teachers are looking for more *respect* from key constituencies.



However, teachers are fairly well respected, and everyone understands how important they are. The aspect that is less understood is the actual job of teaching – what teachers actually do and how much they do.

Learnings from parent council forums

Parents see teaching through the frame of an intimate relationship between the teacher and their child. Teachers also see teaching that way. It is about relationships and moments of connection,

"when the lights go on." The classroom environment is seen as straining or constraining this relationship, detracting from teachers' ability to get to know all kids and, therefore, teach them.

This creates tension between numbers in the classroom, individual program requirements, paperwork, etc., and "teaching" as defined by these intimate relationships and moments of connection.

Complexity in the classroom undermines teachers' ability to build strong and individual relationships with students and that impacts their perception of job success and their job satisfaction.

The skill of teaching and the profession of teaching may be disconnected. Parents and students find it difficult to define or identify the professional skill of teaching. Teachers define this skill as a challenge of problem-solving, persevering, and finding out how to teach/reach each child. The real skill of a teacher is not "teaching" as much as about getting learning to happen. Finding ways to help individuals learn.

Teaching is recognized as hard work, but people outside of the teaching profession do not understand what the work really looks like.

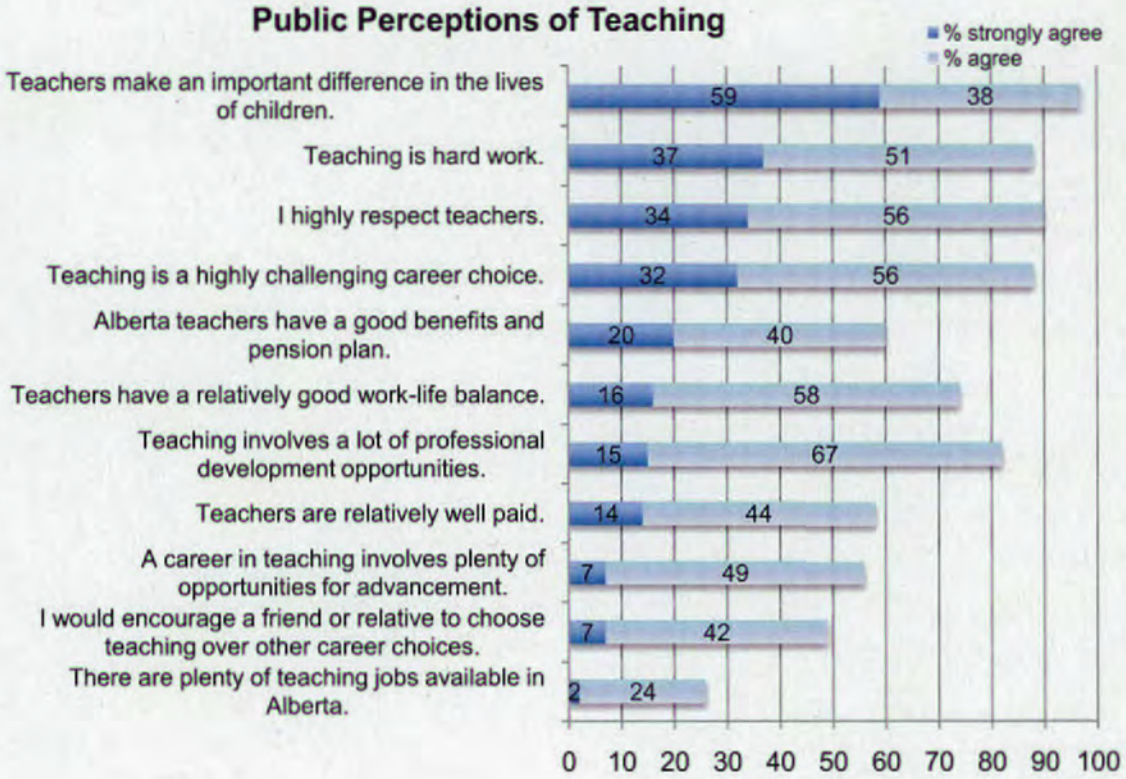
Public Perspectives

Albertans' overall impressions of teachers are somewhat mixed. Nearly six in ten Albertans have either a very positive (9%) or positive (47%) impression of teachers, while only one in ten who have a negative (9%) or very negative (1%) impression. The remaining one-third of Albertans are either neutral in their assessment (30%) or didn't answer the question either way (5% don't know or no answer).

Many in the population respect teachers for the work they do. Teachers are recognized for making an important difference in the lives of children, and teaching is recognized as hard work and a challenging career.

But, teaching is not generally as well recognized for being a relatively well paid occupation, for having a good benefits and pension plan, providing work-life balance, or providing professional development or advancement opportunities.

Very few believe there to be plenty of teaching jobs available in Alberta.



Mixed messages from government

The government is seen to send mixed messages about the importance of education. While the Minister and the department have been speaking about the importance of education, and embarking on significant, visionary initiatives, the budget constraints are considered to be a truer measure of government support for education.

And as was shown in the chart above (on page 8), 0% of teachers strongly agree that they are appropriately valued and respected by politicians, and only 15% agree.

INITIAL STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

Important, but not urgent

The attraction and retention of teachers is seen to be important, but not necessarily urgent.

- There is not the sense of urgency in regions that the forecasting numbers would suggest should exist.
- There is a lot of acceptance of the status quo, and recruiting is approached on a case-by-case or year-to-year basis.
- Budget constraints dramatically complicate long-term hiring strategies.

If there is a crisis bubbling, it is not currently acknowledged.

The fiscal and economic context

The current fiscal and economic context has created a few issues that will make attraction and retention more difficult.

Many school boards have responded to budget constraints by reducing the number of teaching positions in 2010/2011. Our research anticipates the following consequences:

- New students will be discouraged from entering teaching as there will be a perception that fewer jobs will be available. This will erode confidence in teaching as a sustainable career. For example, only 2% of the general public strongly agrees that there are plenty of teaching jobs available in Alberta (and only 24% agree).
- Teacher satisfaction seems to be connected, at least in part, to class size and complexity. This likely will get worse, which will lead to lower satisfaction and higher stress. This could increase attrition over the next few years.
- Belief that government values teaching will erode. While teachers hear positive and encouraging comments from the Minister, they use money as an indicator of the government's true support for education. Already very low, belief that government supports education will erode further.
- While teacher attraction and retention is seen to be important, it will be considered even less urgent until school boards have room to hire.

It will be very difficult for a recruitment campaign to be developed when government funding to school boards is seen to be directly responsible for fewer teaching positions. As well, it will be difficult to raise the profile of teaching as a profession, when government is seen to not support education.

((Note, we acknowledge that the public and teacher perspectives may not be fair, but they are what exist.))

Focus on emotional attrition

Emotional attrition proceeds before physical attrition. Research and best practices indicate that retention efforts will only be successful if they reach teachers during the emotional phase of attrition:

Emotional attrition	Start the new job with enthusiasm.
	Question the decision to accept the job.
	Think seriously about quitting.
	Try to change things.
	Resolve to quit.
Physical attrition	Consider the cost of quitting.
	Passively seek another job.
	Prepare to actively seek.
	Actively seek.
	Get new job offer.
	Quit to accept new job, quit without a job, or stay and disengage

(Branham, 2005)

Increase collaboration in smaller regions

Resources and economies of scale make recruitment and retention in large, urban boards extremely different than the challenges faced by smaller school jurisdictions.

Collaborating to create larger "employment zones" would allow smaller jurisdictions to

- Provide more career opportunities within a rural environment
- Invest in out-of-market recruitment more consistently
- Make offers earlier to candidates

Reposition teaching

Recruitment strategy should be about what rewards teaching brings to your life… revitalizing the great career that teaching is in people minds.

- Focus on the skills to enable learning – the aspect of teaching that most people do not understand,
- Demonstrate that teaching is full of diverse challenges, and
- Demonstrate that teaching is a vibrant profession, with lots of opportunities.

Reframe the recruitment and retention challenge

Given the range of challenges identified, and in particular the relative lack of urgency about the forecast teacher shortage, a better problem to solve may be to focus on attracting the best possible candidates, getting them high performing faster, keeping them engaged and learning longer. This will increase the engagement of high performing teachers across the province, and it also will increase the overall teaching supply.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall approach

There is a real tension between the current need to begin addressing the forecast shortage of teachers in 3 – 5 years, and both the current lower demand for new teachers, as well school districts lack of urgency to address the issue.

Our recommendation is to focus on retention programs in the short-term, and to lay the foundation for elevating the status of education in Alberta.

The only specific recruitment efforts that we recommend in the short-term are targeted initiatives at high demand, specialty areas.

Elevating the Status of the Teaching Profession

Strategic Action #1 in the Workforce Action Plan is to elevate and promote the status of the teaching profession and related careers by enhancing public appreciation and awareness of the profession.

There are two potential approaches to achieve the strategic action:

1. Reposition teaching in a way that elevates the status of the profession
2. Identify and focus on a larger education cause

The direct approach to elevate the status of the profession is to develop a communications campaign that re-positions the teaching profession. This would be accomplished through targeted recruitment campaign focused on high school and university aged-students.

The research identified three key insights around which teaching should be positioned:

ENABLING LEARNING

Teaching is not teaching the way most of the public know it from their own experiences. It has evolved from the sage on the stage to a focus on enabling learning. All of the recent strategic visioning in Alberta, particularly with Inspiring Education and Setting the Direction for Special Education, points to this evolved role of the educator. Teaching should be repositioned as enabling learning for both the benefit of recruitment and retention, and to help society better understand how education has changed.

CHALLENGE

Teaching is a career full of challenges, and should be clearly positioned as a challenging field. Attract people to the profession who want to be challenged in their careers. The specific challenge is the many different skills and approaches teachers use to enable learning. This is an under-appreciated aspect of teaching today.

OPPORTUNITY

Teaching is seen to be a career that lacks opportunity. Once you become a teacher, it is the same job for year, after year, after year. This (mis)perception must be addressed.

By repositioning teaching as a career of challenge and opportunity, we will attract high potential candidates to the profession, and at the same time elevate the status of the profession.

The potential limitations of this approach are

- It may seem contradictory to promote the profession during a time of budget limitations being executed through staffing reductions.
- As a recruitment campaign, this will be focused on a smaller audience, and does not necessarily improve the perceptions among the entire population.

Aligning with a Larger Cause

This recommended approach is based on the premise that the teaching profession has an image challenge. But this might not be the larger issue. The larger issue might be that **education has an image challenge in Alberta society.** There are a number of indicators that this may be a valid issue:

- High school completion is among the lowest in Canada.
- Transition to post-secondary education is far below target.
- Educators in smaller communities report a lack of support for education from the community.

A number of economic arguments have been used to explain the low high school graduation and transition to post-secondary rates, but these still support the issue that education is not as valued as an immediate job.

This strategic approach is focused on the province, along with all the education stakeholders, targeting a cause: the critical importance of high school education to lifelong opportunity; and creating a campaign to promote high school completion. A distinct and critical component of this overall campaign would be a recruitment initiative to find teachers who are up to the challenge to help students reach these goals.

This is a cause that far more stakeholders can rally behind than teacher attraction and retention. There is also an opportunity to bring new stakeholders into the initiative, as employers have a critical role to play in encouraging students to stay in school and graduate.

If the provincial economy picks up as expected, then the lure of jobs over graduation will only increase, making this an important initiative to launch immediately.

While the government will always be criticized for not investing more in education when these issues exist, this approach may be less vulnerable to criticism than a pure "elevation of the status of the profession campaign."

Finally, there is very strong alignment between the cause of high school completion and transition to post-secondary with other key visionary and policy-driven initiatives in the department.

Recommendation

We recommend that a campaign to promote high school completion, and increase transition to post-secondary education be developed and executed. This would include a clear and distinct call for teaching professionals up for the challenge to join the cause.

YEAR ONE

Develop a communications campaign that encourages students to finish high school and to pursue some kind of post-secondary education. Use the initial successes of high school completion initiatives as a foundation for the campaign. Focus on the economic benefits of high school completion.

YEAR TWO

Elevate the campaign to a cause. A rallying cry for stakeholders across the province to join in encouraging all students to complete high school.

Develop specific communications that challenge new teachers to join the cause and share their passion for learning with others. This will be a critical element of the campaign in order to ensure that it contributes to the supply of new teachers.

OTHER SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

Focus on local school leadership

While school leadership is included in the Workforce Planning Framework for Action (Strategic Action 10), we recommend that this strategic action become the primary focus of retention efforts. **More success will be realized by developing outstanding local school leaders, than by any other initiative.**

To the extent that budgets can support this strategy, we recommend the following initiatives be considered:

- Develop principal and vice-principal leadership development programs.
- Separate leadership from management - develop a pilot to hire professional managers to handle administrative roles in larger schools.
- Conduct a research study into best practices in local school leadership. Iclude as a benchmark and source of best practices other industries/ sectors that operate a similar model (head office with a bunch of local offices).
- Develop upward evaluations for school staff and teachers to evaluate school administration.
- Provide local schools with a discretionary fund to reward teachers and staff for outstanding performance.

Develop a targeted recruitment campaign to current post-secondary students

Many of the teachers that will be required in 3 - 5 years are in post-secondary education today. This focused audience is a primary target for recruitment messages. These messages can also focus on key high/demand, low supply areas including specialty subjects.

This campaign would use traditional campus media, including radio, newspaper and posters, as well as social media.

The key messages of this campaign would include:

- Teaching is really the skills of enabling learning
- Teaching is a highly challenging and rewarding career
- There will be lots need for new teachers as our student population grows
- Lifelong learning and growth opportunities within teaching

Consider specific messages targeted at specialty subject teachers that position teaching as a challenging way to share the love of their subject.

It is estimated than an annual budget of $150,000 would allow for an extremely robust campaign to be executed across Alberta.

Provide workforce-planning projections directly to Education faculty across the province.

A key support initiative to the targeted recruitment campaign is to provide critical information to education faculty to support the rationale for the campaign. The workforce planning projections provide a clear indication to students that there will likely be jobs available to them by the time they graduate. This focused distribution of information will help reinforce the credibility of the campaign.

Formalize mentoring programs for new teachers.

Strategic Action #7 focuses on mentoring, and this research indicates that mentoring is essential. It will be important to rapidly determine the success of best practices, and share these across the province.

- The pilot initiative in Chinook's Edge is believed to show significant promise.
- Formalize mentoring in the job description for exemplary teachers. Provide time for them to provide mentoring to young teachers.
- Fund beginning teachers to spend time with their mentors.
- Work with the post-secondary institutions to allow them to provide mentoring for their graduating students for the two years after graduation.

In addition, we recommend developing formal mentoring programs for substitute teachers, especially young/new substitute teachers.

Develop a practical unit on "things you need to know in the classroom"

There is a lot of knowledge new teachers would benefit from having, that is not (well) covered in their formal education. A practical guidebook can be developed and written by teachers for distribution to new teachers:

- have teachers in their 3rd – 5th year write this over the summer
- provide to all entering teachers, across the province
- offer these teacher/authors as speakers to education programs to share the insights

Create a summary of promising practices

Create a short promising practices summary of recruitment and retention initiatives based on the findings of this research. What is working, both qualitatively and quantitatively, with specific recommendations for what school districts can do locally.

MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

A number of initiative have high potential to positively impact the recruitment and retention challenge, however they require more time or more resources to implement that is available in the short-term.

We have not differentiated whether each of these is a short-term or a long-term initiative, as this assessment is better made by department, or by the advisory committee.

Encourage HR cooperation between rural school districts

Increase mobility between school districts by making it easier for teachers to pursue job opportunities across different school regions in the province. Allowing teachers to find the best fit in a school among different rural divisions will increase the retention of teachers in rural Alberta.

Create larger "hiring pools" of rural school districts and hire new graduates into the pool – before specific positions in specific communities are identified.

Have the "hiring pools" attend career fairs at both the high school and post-secondary level to let students know there are jobs available for teachers in these communities.

Encourage strategic HR planning

The current economic uncertainty and education budget constraints have the potential to undermine certainty in the education system for a number of years. And it will be difficult for the government to re-establish confidence amongst emerging graduates that there will be a stable supply of jobs and opportunities.

One important tool to consider is through multi-year school division budget commitment, tied to actual enrolments. The current enrolment forecasting model can be used to develop the budget projections. This will bring greater attention to the forecasting model, and it will encourage school divisions to develop longer-term HR plans.

Three year contracts might also be considered for new teachers, as a way to provide stability and reduce pressure, allowing them to find their niche and become the best teachers they can be.

Facilitate rotations for early career teachers

Aligning teacher skills and interests with their jobs is important. And young teachers benefit from exposure to different areas in order to identify what the "right areas" are for them.

Make it easy for early career teachers to request and receive transfers to other schools and grades until they find their niche. This may conflict with the current seniority-based approach to offering positions.

Create global learning communities

Develop partnerships with other jurisdictions around the world and encourage teachers to join these global learning communities. Pilot this initiative in rural school districts where the local learning community is much smaller.

Encourage more practicums in teacher preparation programs

Increase the minimum standard for graduating teachers in Alberta.

Include a practicum that covers the first two weeks of school.

Conduct a best or promising practices study to identify optimal approaches to planning and scheduling practicums for educational formation.

Enhance the curriculum for teacher education

Promote collaboration between stakeholders such as school board HR directors, new teachers, and education faculties in order to make teacher preparation more relevant to the real world.

Increase the depth of knowledge provided for special education.

Specifically address the non-pedagogical aspects of teaching – discipline, parent communication.

Rural retention

These recommendations are designed to enhance Strategic Action #4:

- Encourage a minimum three-year initial placement in rural communities to allow new teachers time to build relationships with the community.

- Facilitate local community engagement. Work with parent councils to integrate new teachers into the community.
- Create community-based "learning communities" in small towns. Bring together other professionals, and teachers from different schools, to create larger learning communities.
- Encourage the use of schools as a centre for arts, sports, culture and learning in the community. There are some excellent examples of multi-use schools in some communities, but this can be developed further in many other communities.

Expand professional development beyond the profession

Extend the current professional development programs to other individuals who "teach" school-aged children. This would include high-school and university aged, tutors, special needs caregivers (i.e., Community and Behavioural Aides), community leaders (i.e., Boy Scouts, Girl Guides). By spreading the expertise of enabling learning, this will both attract people to the profession, and increase awareness of what are the true skills of teaching.

Create a practicum-based approach to recognizing foreign credentials for teachers

Develop a specific program to recognize foreign credentials, but place the emphasis on the practicum experience. This is particularly important as many cultural and social conventions are a significant challenge for immigrants, and these will be better learned in the school setting.

Create community-based HR strategies with complementary industries

Industries such as forestry and tourism have as many challenges with rural attraction and retention as does education. By developing strategic HR partnerships a very effective and broad-based initiative to bring families to rural Alberta may be extremely effective.

Create more opportunities for career advancement that are not into administration

Develop a set of formal designations of mastery for teachers to allow their careers to progress without having to go into a formal administrative role. The objective is to keep these great teachers in the classroom, but allow them to continually develop their skills and their career.

- Specialty designations
- Mastery of teaching
- Formal mentor designations (plus the time allowed to mentor)

This would involve changing the pay scale to recognize these specific credentials.

Create more satellite campus centres for teacher education, allowing students to learn to become teachers closer to their homes.

Work with the post-secondary institutions to allow more local education of teachers. Specifically targeting communities with significant out-of-province hiring, and high turnover.

Provide tuition assistance for other rural Alberta students to attend these satellite campuses, in return for three-year commitment to teaching in their community.

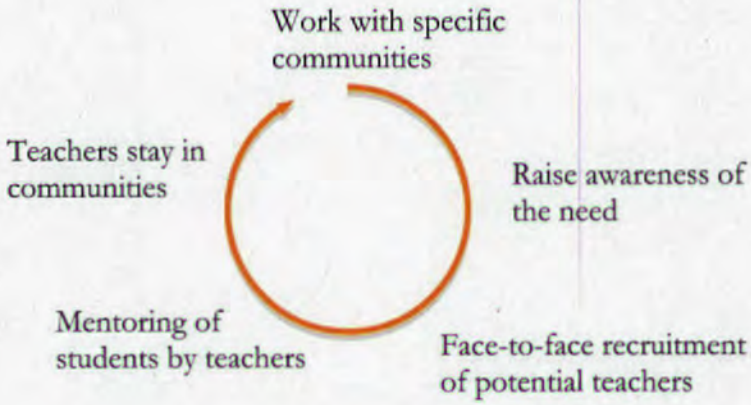
Create a high school course about "teaching and coaching".

Develop a high school course that teaches the skills of enabling learning. Position it as a useful tool for anyone who thinks they might be a leader, manager or coach in the future. Develop the skills (and appreciation) of education among high school students.

FMNI Teacher Recruitment

These recommendations are designed to support Strategic Action #5. We do not believe that FNMI teacher attraction will be effective through any general recruitment campaign.

Initiatives where teacher training happens in local communities are ideal. Where this is not possible, a face-to-face recruitment approach can be undertaken:


Work with specific communities
Raise awareness of the need
Face-to-face recruitment of potential teachers
Mentoring of students by teachers
Teachers stay in communities

Work with specific communities.

- Work with the FMNI Education Partnership Council to identify communities with specific needs.
- Meet with community leaders to engage with them individually.
- Develop a customized local approach.

Raise awareness of the need (don't assume that communities understand the need).

- Develop local community communications to raise awareness of the local need for teachers.
- Focus on the values of building community strength and caring for children.

Use face-to-face recruiting of potential teachers by existing teachers.

- Enrol existing teachers (ideally from the community, rather than from outside the community) to identify potential future teachers.
- Help these students with applications processes to teacher colleges.

Encourage mentoring of students by teachers.

- Create formal mentoring programs whereby students away at a college have a mentor back in the community who can provide them with wisdom and guidance.

END NOTES

[i] 2009 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, Harris Interactive, pg. 46. This survey was conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,003 public school teachers of grades K through 12 was interviewed. Interviews were conducted via telephone. Respondents were recruited using a targeted sample list. Telephone interviews averaged 15 minutes in length and were conducted between October 15, 2009 and November 12, 2009.
http://www.metlife.com/about/corporate-profile/citizenship/metlife-foundation/metlife-survey-of-the-american-teacher.html?SCOPE=Metlife&MSHiC=65001&L=10&W=MetLife%20The%20survey%20&Pre=%3CFONT%20STYLE%3D%22background%3A%23ffff00%22%3E&Post=%3C/FONT%3E